

**SUMMARY REPORT OF  
ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER THE  
PILOT LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

**COMMUNICATION AND CITIZEN  
PARTICIPATION**

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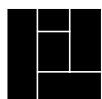


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# **SUMMARY REPORT OF ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER THE PILOT LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

## **COMMUNICATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OBJECTIVES**

#### ***Overview***

The Communication and Citizen Participation Module of the Pilot Local Government Partnership Program (LGPP) is designed to enhance communication and citizen participation through research, strategic planning, educational workshops, training and the development of specific tools and techniques for participating gminas. The Module assumes that increased citizen participation and improved communication in Polish cities supports:

- Productive relationships among local government, NGOs, interest groups, business, academia and individual citizens.
- Partnerships committed to identifying and addressing community problems and opportunities.
- Sustainable systems which nurture ownership, trust and accountability.
- Enhanced performance of local government and its employees.
- Two-way communication integrated into all key gmina initiatives and activities.

#### ***Implementation in Polish Cities***

Pilot LGPP initiatives for improved Communication and Citizen Participation were undertaken in two Polish gminas, Gliwice and Kutno. Key objectives follow.

##### **Gliwice Objectives**

Work began in Gliwice in October 1996. Initial objectives included:

- Assess current and past communication and participation activities. Identify opportunities to promote understanding and collaboration.
- Identify critical programs and key issues which local government should address.

- Identify opportunities to share information and experience regionally.
- Identify opportunities to build on recent successes, including the partnership approach that resulted in the building of the new General Motors plant in Gliwice.

The October preliminary scan revealed that although Gliwice was investing in many communication initiatives, the municipality lacked a comprehensive, focused approach. Key objectives from December 1996 through October 1997 included:

- Develop with Gliwice officials a strategic communication plan which:
  - Supports improved communication and citizen participation.
  - Is driven by city business and common community vision, values and goals.
  - Leverages existing assets and resources, including the expanding Municipal Customer Service Center, existing public relations program, economic development activities and the efforts of many municipal enterprises.
- Conduct a workshop for key city officials focused on:
  - Approaching communication as relationships.
  - Identifying key community relationships and opportunities to improve them.
  - Learning while using strategic communication planning tools.
  - Using the workshop to involve officials, including the Mayor's executive board and the director of the economic development agency, in preparation of the strategic communication plan.

### **Kutno Objectives**

Pilot LGPP work in Kutno began in July 1996 with technical assistance in economic development. The objectives were to:

- Identify the key opportunities and constraints affecting the feasibility of the local economic development plan for Kutno.
- Identify key opportunities and constraints that affect the feasibility of the proposed Kutno Agro-Industrial Park (KPAP).
- Identify key issues that the city must address to promote and develop KPAP.
- Identify possibilities of establishing an enterprise to promote and develop KPAP.

Technical Assistance in communication and citizen participation followed (March through August, 1997) to support the economic development efforts. Objectives included:

- Design and facilitate a three-day strategic planning workshop with the city and KPAP task force to:
  - Define and prioritize a set of key actions needed to plan, design and implement KPAP;
  - Assign responsibilities for the key actions; and
  - Develop and agree on an implementation schedule.
- Help the city develop a public participation strategy that could both formally and informally involve key stakeholders (citizens, local businesses, city employees, the press and others) in the planning and design of the Kutno Agro-Industrial Park (KPAP) and to provide factual information about KPAP.

## OVERVIEW OF ACTUAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### *Technical Assistance Provided to Gliwice*

A team of two communication and participation consultants (B. Guerrant and B. Gadell) integrated technical assistance efforts, as possible, with Pilot LGPP economic development consultant (P. Dusenbury). This partnership supported the commitment to link communication and participation improvements with priority city business goals.

Pilot LGPP work in Gliwice began in October 1996 with a preliminary environmental scan of forces supporting and hindering improved communication and citizen participation. Through focused observation, review of publications and interviews with city officials, the news media, citizen interest groups and business groups, including the Chamber of Commerce, the team identified strengths and weaknesses, including:

- Potential to build upon the Gliwice's innovative and expanding Municipal Customer Service Center that provided information and routine services, such as registration and permits. The center—designed and implemented by a cross-functional team of municipal employees—provided a solid base for working across department lines on communication and service improvements. The center has potential to serve as a regional, national and international model.
- Potential to build upon Gliwice's success in winning of the General Motors Plant. The team approach that won the plant provided a practical model of what could be achieved when local government, business, academia and interest groups worked as partners toward a clear, common goal.
- Innovative use of technology, including the World Wide Web, in support of improved communication and service delivery. Significant technological expertise with the municipality and in the community.

- Significant, but fragmented, use of many communication vehicles—print, radio, TV and Web—to deliver information to citizens. Some sporadic use of two-way communication vehicles, including citizen surveying and neighborhood meetings.
- No integrated, comprehensive communication strategy that is driven by business goals, integrated into the work of all departments and leverages available resources.

The team completed the scan in December 1996 with:

- Comprehensive assessment with city staff of city publications, promotion and public relations products, reports, budget and organization materials.
- Tours—and in some cases extended conversations with employees—of city facilities and operations, schools and libraries, health and welfare facilities, Silesian Technical University, diverse community and business facilities.
- Observation of selected events, including a City Council meeting, news conference and ribbon-cutting for a new city financial services center.
- Open, focused dialogue in meetings with elected and appointed government officials, front-line city staff, community leaders and citizens.

The team identified seven fundamental beliefs and assumptions that emerged consistently in the public participation, public relations and information arena. Gliwice municipal officials, interest groups and individual citizens exhibited:

- Unquestionable commitment to collaborative, not combative, public participation
- Desire to work effectively in fast-paced, rapidly changing environment
- Recognition that shift to participatory, collaborative approach will take time
- Desire to make data driven decisions, to rely less on "instinct"
- Desire for strategic, not shotgun, public information and participation
- Leadership commitment to direct involvement in strategy and in modeling behavior in the city organization and community
- Significant community pride and enthusiasm



The team and Gliwice municipal officials agreed to:

- Continue working “virtually” via Internet e-mail with the assistant to the Mayor to share U.S. experience with customer surveying and identify a strategic communication planning tool appropriate for use in Gliwice.
- Conduct a facilitated process, including a training workshop, that starts with the city executive board (Mayor, Vice Mayors and key staff) and leads to a comprehensive public participation and public information strategy driven by business goals. Systems for information exchange would be included in the strategy.

In April 1996, the consultant team in full partnership with the Assistant to the Mayor of Gliwice and Pilot LGPP city team leader C. Chmura:

- Augmented prior scan data with additional interviews of key groups, particularly individual citizens of diverse age groups.
- Conducted a communication and citizen participation training workshop for city leadership, including the Mayor and his executive board and the director of the economic development agency.
- Using a strategic communication planning tool, developed with workshop participants the first draft of the communication and citizen participation strategy.

Gliwice's strategy assumes improved communication and citizen participation in local government depends upon building relationships. It identifies four key relationships key to local government:

- Individual citizens/interest groups
- Economic development partners
- News media
- Municipal employees and elected officials

The strategy includes key results, objectives and performance measures for each relationship area. Since April, the municipality has used the strategy to expand its public relations office into a comprehensive, strategically focused bureau of information and promotion. The bureau staff is using the strategy to design its 1998 business plan and budget proposal.

### ***Technical Assistance Provided to Kutno***

In early 1997, the mayor appointed a KPAP task force composed of two vice mayors, heads of city offices (planning, budget, statistical studies, architecture) and representatives from the local business community. The 17 member task force had been formed and was meeting regularly, and had requested LGPP to provide technical assistance to help develop a strategy to implement KPAP.

The Pilot LGPP, in collaboration with the city, had contracted with the American Systems of Marketing (AMS), a local firm in Kutno, to prepare a market survey of the region that included:

- Characteristics of the region
- People resources
- Agriculture
- Infrastructure
- Education levels
- Employment and unemployment information

In March 1997, a training and public participation specialist (K. Alison) worked with the economic development specialist (B. Liner) on the design and facilitation of a three-day strategic planning workshop. The information prepared by AMS was integrated into the design of the workshop, as was an exercise in identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT tool) of KPAP. This data became the basis for the task force's work to develop three detailed action plans:

- KPAP Physical Development Plan
- Public Participation Plan
- KPAP Marketing Plan

The implementation of the physical development plan was assigned to relevant city offices. Implementation of the marketing plan was assigned to the Regional Development Authority (RDA) who was designated as the Project Operator.

Prior to the workshop, the city had not considered the idea of involvement of local citizens in KPAP. As a result of the market survey and subsequent discussions during the workshop, task force members decided it was important to assess the current knowledge and attitudes of Kutno citizens about KPAP, in order to develop a detailed public participation strategy. The study was subsequently commissioned by LGPP and again carried out by AMS.

In early June 1997, the mayor and city council came under severe attack from the local and regional opposition press for their involvement in KPAP. The news stories accused the city of wasting money on buying undeveloped land on the outskirts of town, of driving away outside investors, and claimed that the city was involved in illegal activities with other potential investors. Because of this attack, the mayor and task force began to realize that an immediate plan to involve local citizens in discussions about KPAP was imperative. A public participation specialist (K. Alison) provided technical assistance in June that turned into a "just in time" intervention to help deal with the press attack.

The technical assistance provided during the June visit included the following three activities that were designed to respond to the negative press accounts:

- Design and facilitation of a one day workshop on KPAP for 40 city department managers and company managers to get them more involved in planning and implementing KPAP and to become spokespersons for KPAP.

Specifically, the city managers were briefed about the status of KPAP and then asked to identify:

- Potential audiences
  - Potential messages
  - Potential ways to involve target audiences in the planning of KPAP
- Briefing of the city board on the objectives and proposed activities of the KPAP public participation strategy and ask for their input on next steps.
  - Supporting the city press officer in organizing and holding a press conference on KPAP for local reporters, including preparation of a press package that contained accurate information about the status of the activity. (While the press had published numerous stories prior to the press conference, they did not publish one story after the press conference.)

At the end of the consultancy, the mayor requested that the public participation consultant return to Kutno in July to continue the planning process for a public participation strategy.

The July/August technical assistance included the following three activities:

- A workshop with 15 task force members and three city council representatives to develop detailed KPAP communications/public participation plans for five audiences (general public, press, local businesses, city hall and city council members, and outside investors).
- A planning session with the mayor and task force on team building and clarification of roles and responsibilities related to KPAP activities.
- Coaching of the Kutno press officer to support the city's outreach efforts with the five audiences mentioned above.

The workshop integrated the results of two surveys done by AMS:

- “Investors' Perceptions about Investing in Kutno”
- “Local Business' Attitudes about KPAP”

The communications plans developed during the August workshop included specific actions, responsibilities, time frame, and resources required to involve the five audiences. Plans were limited to three-four realistic actions over the next five-six months.

The planning session continued the process of clarifying roles and responsibilities of the city employees and the Project Operator (the Regional Development Authority).

The coaching sessions provided an opportunity for the press officer to develop skills in various communications techniques (collaboration with local journalists, script writing, news writing, design of radio programs).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

### ***Gliwice***

- City leadership demonstrates commitment to open, honest communication and citizen participation. Leadership engaged in training and has funded improvement efforts to improve internal and external communication and service delivery.
- Elected and appointed officials demonstrate they are open to continually learning and expanding experience, systems and tools in support of effective, responsive and accountable local government.
- City and community representatives recognize that the shift to participatory government will take time. The rapidly changing environment, fast pace and problems hinder focused improvement.
- The municipality openly shares information with citizens through many communication vehicles, both print and electronic. Is just beginning to implement a strategically planned communication program that is driven by key business objectives, targets and leverages resources, and involves citizens in issues and activities that affect them *before* problems arise.
- The municipality has some current external market/customer perception data gathered through citizen surveys. Is working to establish systems to continually assess satisfaction and expectations of key groups, including city employees, business, academia, NGOs and news media.
- City officials and citizens interviewed by consultants recognize the significance of community pride, enthusiasm, confidence and the "Can Do" attitude. Dissatisfaction with traffic, taxes, lack of jobs opportunities could erode community confidence.
- Officials demonstrate their commitment to innovation, openness and accessibility through the City Hall one-stop customer service centers for general and financial services. City officials are working to build on the centers' successes and nurture customer-focused attitude and practices in operating and enterprise departments.

- Leadership recognizes the benefits of responsiveness and teamwork among government, academia, business and NGOs as demonstrated in the successful GM-Opel Plant bid. City is beginning to transfer this experience to other problems and opportunities, especially in support of economic development.
- The municipality is taking lead in regional organizations and issues, such as economic development. Local government roles, responsibilities and funding are dynamic and evolving. City leaders recognize need for strategic regional alliances.
- The municipality is expanding its press and public relations office with the establishment of a full-service information and promotion bureau to support open, honest relationships with the media, all municipal employees and citizens. The municipality is using the communication and participation strategy developed with Pilot LGPP assistance to steer the bureau's business plan and 1998 budget.

### **Kutno**

- Planning for a public participation strategy takes time and effort. City officials have to first believe that public participation is important to achieving their goals.
- Market research on the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of key stakeholders is necessary before a public participation plan can be developed and implemented.
- A public participation strategy is most useful when integrated with some kind of specific city program or effort (like economic development).
- City officials have not had much, if any, experience with public participation. Distinctions need to be made between “propaganda” (more one-way communications) and “public participation” (more two-way interactions).
- Unless mayors internalize the importance of being transparent about their plans for the city and of involving others in their plans, they may run into opposition for their programs and will have no allies. Mayors can develop support for their programs through a concerted effort to inform and involve city employees and city council members, as well as the local business community, and other citizen groups. Task forces composed of representatives of various stakeholders are an important and effective mechanism for involving key stakeholders in decisions about city development issues.
- Crises (such as attacks by the press or other opponents) can generate a heightened understanding of, and need for, a public participation strategy.
- Training in team building, effective meeting management, and communications skills is important for mayors, city employees, and task force members to help them build effective, functioning teams. If the implementing team or task force does not have a clear vision, agreed upon objectives, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the public participation efforts (as well as other development efforts) will be less than successful. These skills will also be useful in planning and designing focus groups, public

hearings, city council meetings, workshops with local business leaders, citizen meetings, and other outreach activities.

- Local press officers would benefit from basic communications skills training and coaching in working collaboratively with local journalists, writing press releases, developing video scripts, conducting effective interviewing, lay-out and design of brochures and newsletters.
- Use of the same consultant(s) over a period of time helps build trust and can move the public participation process forward more quickly. The availability of the consultant via e-mail, fax and phone between visits is also useful in supporting the efforts of the mayor, press officer and others in implementing the public participation activities.

### ***General Conclusions/Lesson Learned***

- Focused market research data of internal and external audiences is critical for guiding the implementation of a comprehensive communication strategy.
- A thorough scan of the environment and audit of current communication and citizen participation programs are essential to establish baseline data and to measure progress toward results.
- Consultants providing technical assistance in the gmina should coordinate, at minimum, and integrate their work, as possible, to maximize opportunities and minimize potential for collisions.
- Effectiveness in Gliwice was enhanced by the Mayor's appointment of a single-point-of-contact who worked continually with consultants on-site and via Internet e-mail. This collaboration enhanced planning and follow-up and, ultimately, resulted in a genuine partnership and transfer of skills and experience.
- Best results are achieved when City leadership is engaged in an open and honest review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats helping and hindering improved communication and citizen participation.
- Because resources are limited, communication plans should target strategic result areas identified as critical to community and government success.
- Best results are achieved when leadership commits to the integration of communication and citizen participation principles throughout the organization and support programs with central administrative guidance and resources for implementation, training and evaluation.
- The formation of a formal internal network—a cross-functional team of representatives from all municipal departments—will enhance strategic communication initiatives, leverage available resources and foster improved internal and external information sharing.
- Leaders, managers, information specialists and employees working with the public will perform better with training to enhance their skills and knowledge in: basic communication, presentation techniques,



customer service excellence, strategic communication planning, news media relations, participation techniques and tools; and, team building.

- Polish firms and consultants skilled in training, market research, group facilitation, public participation programs, strategic communication planning, news media relations and customer service should be identified, documented in a resource guide/database and shared in print and electronic form, on the Internet and through municipal and professional associations and institutions.